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Chairman: Mr. Galuška ..... (Czech Republic)

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00-23520 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 106: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/54/L.9/Rev.1)

Draft resolution A/C.3/54/L.9/Rev.1: Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: towards a society for all in the twenty-first century

1. **Ms. Ramiro-Lopez** (Philippines), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Belgium, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Jamaica, Malta, Norway, Portugal and Sweden, said that, following consultations, agreement had been reached on all the key elements of the draft resolution. The European Union, particularly Finland, and Algeria, Bangladesh, China, Egypt and Norway had made a special contribution to that process, as had the staff of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in the Division for Social Policy and Development.

2. Operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution had been revised to read: "Welcomes the initiatives of Governments to enhance the rights of persons with disabilities and for the further equalization of opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities, and also welcomes the contribution of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate, in this regard".

3. Operative paragraph 4 had been revised by inserting, after the words "to take concrete measures", the words "to promote the implementation of relevant United Nations resolution and agreed international standards concerning persons with disabilities, in particular the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities".

4. The draft resolution provided a broad framework for the promotion of human rights and called for measures in relation to disabled persons that had been examined on the occasion of the third review and evaluation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. It also included new elements such as the importance of technology and access to information and telecommunications for the effective participation of persons with disabilities in social life and in development. It emphasized the importance of public information and timely statistics for the design of policies and strategies concerning persons with disabilities. Lastly, it encouraged Governments, concerned non-governmental organizations and the private sector to continue to support the Untied Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability, which, according to the Secretary-General's report (A/54/388/Add.1) had allocated $1 million to 35 disability-related projects.

Agenda item 114: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (*continued*) (A/54/18, A/54/98, A/54/299, A/54/347)

Agenda item 115: Right of peoples to self-determination (*continued*) (A/54/98, A/54/118-S/1999/633, A/54/326, A/54/327)

5. **Mr. Moniaga** (Indonesia) said that racism and racial discrimination continued to exist and, notwithstanding successes such as the demise of apartheid, would remain on the international agenda well into the twenty-first century. Despite the international community's strong determination to address racism in all its aspects and to achieve the goals of equality and justice, the resources and the ability to implement the programmes of action of the United Nations Decades to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination continued to be lacking, as the Commission on Human Rights had pointed out with regard to the Third Decade and its Programme of Action. The General Assembly must therefore request the Secretary-General to assign high priority to activities under that Programme and to earmark adequate resources to finance them.

6. In that connection, his delegation looked forward to the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which should be action-oriented and aimed at the genuine eradication of contemporary forms of racism. It was important that the Conference focus on racism in all its aspects as a global problem demanding a global response. No country, Indonesia included, could claim to be free of prejudice and racism and it would be counterproductive to target specific countries. His delegation trusted that the question of the human and financial resources that would be needed both for the preparatory process and for the Conference itself would receive appropriate

consideration at the current session and that it would not prove an obstacle to a successful Conference. In that connection, it noted the generous offer made by the Government of South Africa to host the Conference.

7. One fundamental objective of the Conference which was particularly important was the universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which Indonesia had recently ratified and was currently following up by harmonizing its national laws with the Convention and reviewing all legislation that could have discriminatory connotations.

8. His Government had responded promptly to manifestations of intolerance and was determined to prevent their recurrence. It was conducting a review of its legislation to ensure that all citizens received equal treatment in accordance with the 1945 Constitution. No government regulation should discriminate against an ethnic group. The Government no longer used identifying codes on Indonesian Chinese identity cards and all government officials had been instructed, by presidential decree No. 126/1998, to abolish the use of terms identifying indigenous and non-indigenous Indonesians in all government activities, policies and documents. The decree also instructed that equal treatment and service be given to all citizens, without distinction as to race, ethnic origin or religion. As a moral and pluralistic society, Indonesia was committed to promoting respect for human rights and taking into account the varied cultural, ethnic and religious composition of the nation, as provided for in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

9. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that ethnic cleansing, the resurgence of false doctrines of racial superiority, the trend towards restricting the rights of migrant workers, the use of new technologies to spread intolerance and the abuses committed against asylum-seekers and refugees were just some of the obstacles which the international community must overcome to keep alive the spirit that had inspired the historic struggle to put an end to racism.

10. Brazil was proud of its historical legacy of harmonious coexistence among people of difference religious, racial and cultural backgrounds and had consistently rejected the logic of ethnic borders. It therefore supported the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in the year 2001. That Conference should be action-oriented and come up with concrete commitments and measures to counter racial discrimination and intolerance, wherever they occurred. It must send a clear message that was understood by the public at large. Her Government planned to set up a national committee to prepare for Brazil's participation in the Conference, and civil society would have a central role throughout that process. At the same time, it would continue to lend its support to the work of the Special Rapporteur on that issue, who must be given all necessary means to discharge his mandate.

11. Brazil's society and Government were engaged in promoting the rights of the country's black population, indigenous people and minorities. Activities to that end included the review of schoolbooks to eliminate stereotyping based on colour, ethnicity, gender and national origin. A working group had also been set up to foster equal job opportunity. Under Brazilian legislation, racism was a crime for which there was no bail or statute of limitations. Any kind of racial discrimination was punishable by law. Brazil was proud to be a melting pot of cultures, all of which had contributed to building a tolerant, multi-ethnic society.

12. Her Government was deeply committed to the right of peoples to self-determination, which was a basic value in human society and also an inalienable right of peoples under colonial or other forms of foreign domination. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action recognized the right of peoples to self-determination, for which it was essential to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law for the benefit of all.

13. **Crown Prince Haakon** (Norway) said that ethnic diversity was a resource which must not be allowed to be wasted by ignorance and intolerance. One step in the right direction was to ratify and implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance offered a chance to make progress in that field.

14. Despite the efforts made by the international community, under United Nations auspices, to combat racism, the objective of eliminating all forms of racism and racial discrimination was still far from being attained. Racism was an assault on human dignity

which also manifested itself in the systematic ethnic cleansing recently witnessed in several parts of the world. Racism and discrimination were global problems, but measures to combat them must be identified at the local and national level. The challenge therefore began at home. Human rights also began at home. At the same time, domestic challenges had become matters of international concern.

15. Although there had been a multi-ethnic presence in Norway's society for centuries, it was still learning to deal with the challenges of social segregation. Earlier in the year, the Government had ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. It was currently developing policies in that area and had submitted plans to Parliament for improving its policy towards the Sami population. It realized that Norway's population would continue to become more multi-ethnic and that the number of people of immigrant background would increase, and that it would have to learn to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence despite the many obstacles that lay ahead. Although it had taken the initial steps towards new legislation against ethnic discrimination, that was not enough. Education and the promotion of respect for foreign cultures, religions, customs and peoples would gradually wear down the barriers of intolerance. Another measure introduced by the Government was a plan of action against racism and discrimination which included measures to secure equal opportunities in the housing and labour markets. A plan of action to recruit more people of immigrant origin to the public sector had also been introduced and a centre had been established to offer legal advice to victims of ethnic discrimination.

16. Racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia also required a comprehensive range of measures at the international level. In that connection, the preparations for the World Conference had provided Norway with a unique opportunity to strengthen its commitment to combating racism. It was urgent that all countries comply with established standards, and his delegation hoped that the preparatory process would inspire those States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention. His Government believed that a national preparatory process which involved civil society would be beneficial for the outcome and follow-up of the Conference. Norway would be establishing a national preparatory committee for the World Conference in which government ministries, specialized agencies and civil society would be represented.

17. The United Nations had a unique role to play in facilitating and harnessing national, regional and global efforts to combat racism and intolerance. Norway valued the role of United Nations instruments and mechanisms and had already joined forces with those who recognized the importance of providing adequate resources to the human rights machinery, not just in relation to the Conference but as a general policy. It was committed to participating actively and offering its support at all levels in the Conference preparatory process and urged States to renew their commitment to protecting the rights of all persons, regardless of their ethnic, national or religious origin.

18. **Mr. Amir** (Sudan) commended the work done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the context of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and in the preparatory process for the World Conference. Despite the efforts of the international community, however, racism and racial discrimination had taken on new forms in recent years, especially in relation to refugees and ethnic minorities, who had joined the thousands of people worldwide already suffering from those phenomena. The report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/54/347) noted that violent manifestations of those problems persisted, spurred by neo-Nazi and far-right doctrines or even by information media such as the Internet, on which, as the report indicated, there were anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sites. It was ironic that the Internet had served to spread such ideas, rather than to reject them.

19. Intimidation and hatred of foreigners, the desire to perpetuate the supremacy of one group over another, ethnic cleansing and genocide were alarming phenomena that affected everyone. Drawing on its secular traditions and on the principles of peaceful coexistence preached by Islam, his country denounced those manifestations and called for the perpetrators to be identified and restrained and for the problem to be addressed in schools and universities and in places of worship. His Government called on all States to take part in the World Conference, to which it stood ready to contribute, and endorsed the recommendations made by the Commission on Human Rights in its capacity as preparatory committee for the Conference. His Government welcomed the offer by South Africa to

host the Conference, urged that the necessary resources be allocated for convening it and trusted that the Conference would consider both the progress made against racism and the obstacles remaining to its eradication, as well as what measures to take at the national, regional and international levels. As a multi-ethnic, multicultural society, the Sudan had been a tolerant country for centuries, although politically motivated foreign interference had used that diversity to frustrate the people's aspirations for progress, prosperity and well-being. Ethnic, cultural and ideological diversity must lead to unity and coexistence, not cause division and discord.

20. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that the right of peoples to self-determination was a very important item; its realization was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and embodied in human rights instruments, and the international community, principally the United Nations, had a responsibility to guarantee its enjoyment by all peoples. Combating inequality and oppression and securing the right of peoples to self-determination should therefore be among the international community's top priorities. More serious action was required in that regard, especially for people living under foreign occupation or domination. The Palestinian people had for too long suffered from Israeli occupation and oppression, and it was still being denied its right to self-determination. All the known ills of occupation continued, as did Israel's creation of new facts on the ground, foremost of which were illegal settlements, the antithesis of freedom and self-determination for the indigenous people. Moreover, refugees and displaced persons continued to be denied not only their right of self-determination but also their right of return.

21. In the 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, Palestine and Israel had recognized their mutual, legitimate political rights. Since a genuine commitment required recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, however, Palestine preferred to believe that Israel had not recognized that right for tactical reasons, and it hoped that the current peace process would result in full recognition, manifested in the existence of a Palestinian State. Real engagement in the peace process required such recognition, for it was inconceivable to recognize one's adversary as a people while refusing to recognize its right of self-determination. Without such recognition, the peace process could not reach a normal, logical and successful conclusion. At the same time, the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, in exercise of the right of self-determination, could not be subject to any veto. In conclusion, her delegation trusted that Palestine would be able to participate in the forthcoming Millennium Assembly as a full member of the United Nations, and it was confident of the Assembly's support in that regard.

22. **Mr. Zmeevski** (Russian Federation) said that the international community had so far been unable to find an effective remedy against racism and racial discrimination, which were prevalent throughout the world. Contemporary forms of racial discrimination were increasingly complex and also included such phenomena as nationalism, nationalist extremism and xenophobia. The preparatory work for the World Conference must therefore focus on identifying concrete measures for combating them. In that connection, his delegation endorsed the statement in the Secretary-General's report (A/54/299) that the question of racism and racial discrimination should be addressed from a global standpoint, because no part of the world was exempt from those negative phenomena. Racism was not only taking on new forms but also using new means such as the Internet; the preparatory work for the Conference should therefore also look at racism in the electronic media. The only acceptable contemporary form of intolerance was intolerance of any act of discrimination, racism, aggressive nationalism or belligerent xenophobia.

23. His delegation had read the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (A/54/347) with great interest and it noted with concern the many cases of human rights violations committed against gypsies in Kosovo by Albanians, who considered them to be allies of the Serbs. The summary execution, abduction, arbitrary detention and torture perpetrated against the Roma showed the complexity of resolving the conflict in the Balkans, in which the United Nations must play a leading role.

24. His country had been a multi-ethnic State throughout its history and both its legislation on inter-ethnic relations and its State policy in that area, as well as their application, were governed primarily by the need to promote unity among peoples, strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation and eliminate all forms of discrimination. In recent years, federal laws had been enacted concerning autonomous territories

and the rights of minority peoples, and bills on political extremism and the prohibition of Nazi symbols and propaganda had been introduced in the State Duma. A federal programme against political and religious extremism had also been developed. The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities had entered into force in 1999 and it was hoped that its provisions would help to further harmonize inter-ethnic relations within the Russian Federation. In the context of preparations for the World Conference, a subregional conference on racism was to be held in his country.

25. His delegation endorsed the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/299) as to the important role of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in preventing racism, and it hoped that the Latvian authorities would abide voluntarily by the recommendations made by that Committee at its fifty-fifth session concerning the fulfilment of their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In particular, he recalled that the Committee had urged Latvia to change its policy with regard to national minorities and to implement the Committee's recommendations for bringing its legislation into line with international human rights instruments. That issue was also relevant to Estonia.

26. The security and stability of the current world order depended to a large extent on the correct interpretation of the right of peoples to self-determination. It was essential that self-determination should not be viewed in isolation from other principles of international law. Although very important, that right did not justify acts which threatened, in whole or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of a sovereign, independent State. That would be reducing self-determination to the level of separatism, which was currently one of the main causes of inter-State conflict and regional instability, both of which posed a threat to all States. It should also be noted that separatism was becoming increasingly associated with violence and terrorism. It was at his country's initiative that the Security Council had, for the first time in its history, recently held a special session on terrorism, at which it had adopted a resolution unanimously condemning terrorist attacks, especially those, motivated by separatism, which sought to undermine State sovereignty and institutions. The United Nations must help to ensure that the international community firmly opposed such criminal acts.

27. The promotion of local self-government was the best alternative to separatism. In 1998, his Government had ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which recognized local government organs as one of the bases of democracy. The measures taken by his Government in that sphere included the establishment of a congress of municipalities of the Russian Federation, approved in a presidential decree setting forth the principles governing relations between the congress and federal organs. Local interests were also upheld in the Russian Constitution, which guaranteed the independence of autonomous authorities. Lastly, the Government had enacted a number of laws and over 1,300 regulations in that sphere, since people's power was based on local self-government. His Government believed that the right of peoples to self-determination could be exercised constructively only through the democratic process and not through violence or separatism.

28. **Mr. Naser** (Jordan) said that human rights were the heritage of all humankind, regardless of gender, religious, political or other considerations, and that provisions for the protection of those rights were the minimum standards that must prevail in all States. The international community had a duty to overcome the obstacles to the exercise of those rights, especially since the Vienna Conference and in view of violations of the principles which the peoples of the world and the United Nations were fighting to uphold. His delegation was concerned at the increasingly clear manifestations of racial discrimination and xenophobia in many countries of the world, which, as mentioned by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, were reflected in violence, discriminatory policies and racist propaganda on the Internet.

29. His Government had tried constantly to use dialogue and to maintain an open attitude in a region affected by various crises. It had also applied that approach in its domestic policies and legislation, in keeping with its commitment to the main human rights instruments, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It felt that a distinction must be made between pluralism in its historical context and pluralism as it existed politically in a given society, in order to protect the cultural diversity of society while preserving the coherent identity of the nation. It was not enough to

reaffirm tolerance and to defend human rights, which in Jordan were guaranteed by law. What was important was to respect the rights of minorities and to guarantee their representation in political life. His Government was doing its utmost to protect the rights of the most disadvantaged sectors and to guarantee their participation in society.

30. In order to preserve political pluralism at a time when a communications revolution was under way, more attention must be paid to cultural diversity, emphasizing tolerance and the rejection of cultural stereotypes. The notion of a clash of civilizations, xenophobia, racism and negative generalizations must be abandoned in favour of a dialogue with other peoples and cultures, emphasizing what peoples had in common. He welcomed the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in 2001. The Commission on Human Rights had a role to play as the preparatory body for the Conference, and the Special Rapporteur's appeal that it be given all the means necessary to formulate recommendations deserved support.

31. The peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America had made great sacrifices in order to win their right to self-determination, waging a struggle that had always had the support of the United Nations. Despite numerous United Nations resolutions, however, the Palestinian people was still unable to exercise its legitimate right of self-determination in its national territory. His delegation welcomed the progress made in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and hoped that it would be accompanied by the effective implementation of the agreements signed, including the most recent agreement, the Sharm-el-Sheikh Memorandum, as a step towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question that would guarantee the Palestinian people's right of self-determination, including the right to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

32. **Mr. Alaee** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, as the world approached the new millennium, the growing trend of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, in their new manifestations and subtle or violent forms, against, *inter alia*, aliens, minorities, refugees, migrant workers, women and children was a source of serious concern for the international community and human rights mechanisms.

33. Fortunately, the international community had recognized the necessity of holding the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which could provide an opportunity for addressing the issue thoroughly and could serve as a turning point in the struggle against those phenomena by drafting wide-ranging, clear guidelines and practical recommendations. At the same time, the Conference should be action-oriented and review shortcomings in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

34. His delegation appreciated the endeavours of the open-ended working group of the Commission on Human Rights to review and formulate proposals for the World Conference, as well as the discussions held at its first session, in March 1999, on the basis of the seven objectives of the Conference set forth in General Assembly resolution 52/111 of 12 December 1997. In that connection, he wished to emphasize the importance of the following: the organization of regional seminars of experts on recourse and good practices; the creation of an Internet web site on the World Conference; the promotion of universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the crucial role of education and consciousness-raising in combating racism and racial discrimination; consideration of the role of the media, including the Internet, in spreading racism; the use of the Internet as an educational tool to promote tolerance and respect for human dignity and diversity; and the study of ways of increasing the effectiveness of United Nations activities and mechanisms for combating racism.

35. His delegation had participated actively in the discussions and consultations on the resolutions on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance held in the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, and in April 1998 his Government had announced to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that it was prepared to host the Asia regional preparatory meeting for the World Conference. The World Conference and its regional preparatory meetings should address thoroughly the abuse of new communication technologies, including the Internet, for the purpose of incitement to racial hatred and should adopt practical measures to regulate their use. In that connection, the

prohibition on disseminating ideas based on racial superiority, as recognized by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, was a legitimate restriction on freedom of opinion and expression.

36. One clear manifestation of xenophobia and intolerance was the resurgence of discrimination and violence against Muslims. At the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights, States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference had proposed a draft resolution on the defamation and stereotyping of religions, which had been adopted unanimously. His delegation believed that "Islamophobia" fell within the mandates of both the Special Rapporteur on racism and the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance and therefore called upon them to take the provisions of that resolution into account.

37. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea) said that, in the context of the various reports, as well as the disturbing developments in the Horn of Africa, his delegation was obliged to raise the issue of the constitutional framework and the political, economic and social policies which legalized and indeed sanctioned the social, political and economic discrimination, the massive violation of human rights, the deliberate use of the print and electronic media to incite hatred and the perpetration of violence against national and ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

38. Ethiopia was purportedly a federal State organized on the basis of ethnicity. However, the majority of Ethiopian intellectuals and political leaders had denounced such ethnic federalism as a kind of "ethno-apartheid" which was undermining national unity, social harmony, regional peace and economic development and promoting the material interests of only one ethnic group.

39. Politically, the Ethiopian State was divided into *kilils* or administrative zones which had been compared to apartheid South Africa's Bantustans. Those fragmented and non-viable *kilils* had made it possible for the people of Tigray, whose territory had expanded as a result of the annexation of territory from the other ethnic groups, to maintain complete hegemony in the country. Economically, the long-range plan was to create a State in which the wealth of Ethiopia was controlled by less than 4 million of Ethiopia's roughly 60 million inhabitants. Resources were being diverted to Tigray from the other *kilils* and the "federal" Government. The Ethiopian economy had been ethnicized, in other words, it was designed to serve Tigray's development needs and to enrich private Tigreans.

40. The armed forces have been monopolized by the minority regime. Tigray was the only *kilil* to have its own fully equipped standing army, as well as an air force. The federal army formed by the Tigray People's Liberation Army was fully controlled by the regime. That army was regarded by most Ethiopians as an army of occupation which safeguarded the interests of one ethnic group. Ethiopia's foreign policy objectives could be summed up as the restructuring of the region to serve the interests of the minority regime and the creation of a constellation of mini-States dominated by it. To that end, Ethiopia had been building up an ultra-modern, aggressive army which it had already used in Somalia and Eritrea and, worse still, it had hired mercenaries who were participating in the war of aggression against Eritrea. In its dangerous pursuit of regional supremacy, it had occupied Somali territory, violated Kenya's territorial integrity and economically blackmailed a neighbouring country into submission. Its relations with the Sudan and Egypt also left much to be desired.

41. His delegation condemned the use of mercenaries not only because there were several Organization of African Unity (OAU) resolutions condemning it as a bane on African society and because mercenaries had destabilized many African countries and had been brutal instruments in the suppression of the right of peoples to self-determination, but also because Eritrea, both during its liberation struggle and currently as a result of Ethiopia's aggression, had been suffering the consequences of the use of mercenaries by Ethiopia. It was a matter of public knowledge that Ethiopia had hired mercenaries from Eastern Europe, a fact which Eritrea had documented for the Third Committee. According to notable exiled Ethiopian intellectuals and organizations and the Ethiopian press in exile, Ethiopia had become a predatory and repressive ethnic State which had constitutionally institutionalized tribalism in order to benefit a single ethnic group politically and economically, keep that group in power and expand at the expense of other ethnic groups and neighbouring States.

42. According to the same sources, Ethiopia's ethnic minority regime had systematically violated all the norms of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and civilized international conduct. It was

waging a war against humanity which the Committee must condemn both because of its crimes against Ethiopian and foreign national and ethnic groups and because of its reintroduction of mercenaries into Africa. The Committee and the international community must also insist on the unconditional acceptance and application of the OAU peace package.

43. **Mr. Al-Humaimidi** (Iraq) said that his Government had submitted its fourteenth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, whose findings indicated that the difficult economic and social situation prevailing in Iraq and foreign military incursions in different areas of the country had had a negative impact on the implementation of the human rights treaties, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Committee had recalled decision 1998/114 of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and had appealed to the international community, in particular the Security Council, to lift the embargo provisions affecting the humanitarian situation of the population of Iraq. At the same time, the Committee had welcomed the information that Iraq's internal legal order made it possible for individuals directly to invoke the provisions of the Convention before the courts.

44. On the eve of the new millennium, the increase in racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, particularly against migrant workers in countries which claimed to have made great strides in the area of human rights, was a source of grave concern. The report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism (A/54/347) referred to the use of the Internet to spread racist propaganda, including anti-Arab and anti-Muslim propaganda. States must take action to combat that phenomenon.

45. His delegation fully supported the convening in 2001 of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. With regard to the right of peoples to self-determination, the fact that that right was proclaimed in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, following the Article referring to the maintenance of international peace and security, meant that the two Articles were closely linked. The International Covenants had reaffirmed that right and had linked it to the right to development. Those two rights were the cornerstones of peace and security throughout the world. Iraq, which like other countries had gained its independence at the cost of great sacrifices and had been a founding member of the United Nations, was aware of the importance of the right to self-determination and the right of peoples to choose their own political and economic system, and it was proud to have participated in the work of the Special Committee on decolonization since its inception.

46. Despite all that had been done to eliminate colonialism, the current decade had seen a dangerous retrogression, which was reflected in direct and indirect military intervention on a variety of pretexts, the threat of force and the use of political and economic pressure to prevent countries from choosing their own system of government and to subject them to super-Power domination. That was a new form of colonialism. His country was one of the victims of such aggression. The military incursions in northern Iraq violated its sovereignty and territorial integrity and had forced a withdrawal of the central administration from those areas, turning them into a breeding ground for factional infighting and bloody conflict. Moreover, the United States and the United Kingdom had decreed, without any Security Council resolution having been adopted to that effect, that the exclusion zones in northern and southern Iraq should be expanded. On inconceivable pretexts, the United States Government had launched three missile attacks, in 1992, 1993 and 1996, causing substantial material damage. Between 6 and 20 December 1998, the United States and the United Kingdom had launched further military attacks, killing and wounding hundreds of people and destroying Iraq's industrial base and defence infrastructure. In the 25 January 1999 incursion against the city of Basra, 17 people had been killed and hundreds more wounded, and there had been massive material damage. Moreover, the United States and the United Kingdom were continuing their daily bombing raids in northern and southern Iraq on the pretext of maintaining the exclusion zone.

47. Both countries' insistence on maintaining a comprehensive embargo, even if Iraq fulfilled its international commitments, had emerged clearly from statements by the United States authorities. That was a flagrant violation of the right of the Iraqi people to exploit their own resources. The United States had spent $17 million on the financing and training of mercenaries in an attempt to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs and change its regime. The right of self-

determination was a prerequisite for the safeguarding of human rights, and the international community must take firm action against any practice which disregarded that right or interpreted it selectively. His country had chosen its political system by means of a free referendum, thereby reaffirming the Government's commitment to respect that right, and the international community must assume its responsibility under international law with regard to the aggression against Iraq. The United States and the United Kingdom must be urged to halt such acts, which threatened Iraq's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

48. **Ms. Tomic** (Slovenia) noted that equality of all human beings, as provided for in article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was far from being achieved. On the contrary, many armed conflicts were being triggered by the drive for domination, and even stable, flourishing societies were not immune from occurrences of racism, xenophobia or intolerance. Her country was no exception; in recent years, there had been manifestations of intolerance towards those who were perceived as "different" because of their skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation. Intolerance ran counter to the well-being of society and its further socio-economic advancement on the basis of inter-ethnic and cultural diversity. Respect for equality needed to be further enhanced, especially at a time when there were increasing numbers of migrant workers and refugees.

49. Her Government saw the World Conference and its preparatory process primarily as an opportunity to enhance national action for the prevention of racism, xenophobia and intolerance and to build on the process of human rights awareness-raising begun in recent years. Slovenia's national preparatory activities would involve the relevant government ministries and the non-governmental sector. It would continue to participate actively in the European regional preparatory process, which could be extremely useful for exchanging experiences.

50. In the context of the overall aims and objectives set out in General Assembly resolution 52/111, her delegation attached particular importance to the following issues: appropriate information collection and analysis; the existence of professional, independent media; and public awareness-raising through the teaching of tolerance, respect for diversity and human rights values from an early age and the training of target professional groups such as police officers and prison guards. The protection of minorities would also need to be addressed, since cooperation and coexistence among different ethnic communities were of vital importance for developing a tolerant, democratic society.

51. Her delegation commended the Conference-related activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and its racism project team. The Conference should hopefully encourage universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and provide an opportunity for States to submit declarations under article 14 of the Convention.

52. **Mr. Haque** (Pakistan) said that the right of peoples to self-determination was sacrosanct; it was through the exercise of that right that, over the past five decades, the vast majority of the membership of the United Nations had achieved their independence. The United Nations had made an invaluable contribution to the realization of that right, and the central role which it had played recently in organizing the referendum in East Timor was a reflection of the international community's strong belief in that most basic of human rights. His delegation appreciated the courageous and far-sighted decision by the Government of Indonesia to hold the popular consultation process in East Timor. That had been an historic event which had allowed the people of East Timor freely to express their views about their future, and its result had been endorsed by the Indonesian Parliament. The popular consultation process held under United Nations auspices had provided an honourable solution to a longstanding problem and was a useful model for resolving other outstanding issues.

53. In the Middle East, the revival of the peace process had given rise to a new optimism, and the recent signing of the Palestine-Israel agreement on final status talks was encouraging. His delegation was confident that the people of Palestine would soon regain all its territory. Many oppressed peoples continued to be denied their inalienable right of self-determination, however. The people of Jammu and Kashmir had been denied that right for over 50 years. Both India and Pakistan had committed themselves to abide by the decision of the Security Council allowing the people of Jammu and Kashmir to determine their own future through the holding of a free and impartial plebiscite under United Nations auspices. India, however, had failed to honour its solemn commitment

and had so far refused to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, thereby denying the Kashmiri people their right of self-determination. While the United Nations had been organizing the free and impartial popular consultation process in East Timor, the Indian Government had been enacting an electoral farce in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, with the help of more than 700,000 occupation troops, in order to perpetuate its illegal and immoral occupation of Kashmir. More than 88 per cent of the people had boycotted the sham elections, and the entire leadership of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), which had organized the boycott, had been imprisoned. The overwhelming boycott of the so-called elections by the Kashmiri people was the real referendum, and a telling condemnation of India's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. The international community must call upon India to release immediately the APHC leaders who were under illegal detention.

54. The people of Jammu and Kashmir demanded the holding of a free and impartial plebiscite under United Nations auspices, and they expected justice from the Organization. They also expected the international community to be equitable in implementing Security Council resolutions, and the United Nations to play the same proactive role as it had in East Timor. The peace, security and development of the region were intrinsically linked to the solution of that problem. Pakistan stood ready to work towards resolving all its outstanding problems with India through peaceful negotiations.

55. **Mr. Noar** (Egypt) said that the Special Rapporteur's report contained disturbing information about contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in many parts of the world, especially some developed countries. His delegation was deeply concerned at the proliferation of racist propaganda and the incitement to hatred against Muslims and Arabs by certain information media, as described in the report. A distinction needed to be made between freedom of opinion and dissemination of racist propaganda and incitement to hatred. Governments must enact laws to counter the activities of organizations which disseminated such information and to protect groups affected by it. His delegation awaited with interest the holding of the World Conference in 2001 and welcomed South Africa's offer to host the Conference and the efforts which it was making to that end. The United Nations and the international community must provide the financial resources to make that offer a reality. In that connection, his delegation was concerned at the lack of funds to support activities under the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and urged the international community to increase its contributions in order to lend impetus to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Decade before the Conference.

56. **Mr. Leal Cordeiro** (Angola) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by South Africa on behalf of the Group of States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). His Government attached great importance to the issue of racism and racial discrimination, not only because for 500 years its people had suffered the burden of discrimination under colonial rule but also because it viewed all discriminatory practices as inhuman and as a serious threat to harmony among peoples. Angola was made up of peoples of different races, ethnic backgrounds, creeds and religions, and all the rights of its citizens were protected by the Constitution and guaranteed by the Government. Although it did not face conflicts involving racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, it was driven by the duty to strive for a world free of discrimination for future generations of Africans and for Africans living throughout the world.

57. There continued to be widespread manifestations of disguised and increasingly sophisticated forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in the world, particularly in regions with a high level of economic development, a fact that had been recognized and denounced in various forums. As the Special Rapporteur pointed out in his report, the practice of discrimination had not diminished and the goals established for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination were still far from being achieved.

58. His delegation was nevertheless encouraged that some progress had been made, especially the adoption of legislation to protect minorities against racism and other forms of intolerance in many countries and the increase in the number of States which had signed and ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

59. Much remained to be done, however, to ensure the effective implementation of programmes to better

protect the rights of the groups most targeted by racism and racial discrimination, such as national minorities and migrant workers and members of their families. Measures should also be taken to curb emerging neo-fascist and neo-Nazi movements in some countries, as well as increasing manifestations of xenophobia and other discriminatory practices. His delegation stressed the importance of the preparations for the World Conference to be held in 2001, for which the amount of financial resources should be increased. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade and on the Conference preparatory process (A/54/299) revealed a lack of strong commitment on the part of the international community, displayed by the insufficient contributions made thus far to the Trust Fund for the Decade despite the appeal by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/132.

60. His delegation fully supported the right to self-determination of all peoples still living under the colonial yoke. As it had during the decolonization process, the United Nations had played an important role in the recent popular consultation in East Timor, whose people had overwhelmingly rejected foreign occupation and voted for independence. In Western Sahara, his delegation hoped that the combined efforts of the United Nations and OAU towards the holding of a referendum would soon lead to the long-awaited settlement of differences. It also welcomed the latest developments in the Middle East peace process.

61. His delegation was concerned at the continued use of mercenaries in some regions of the world as a means of hindering the full exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination. The report of the Special Rapporteur on that question (A/54/326) demonstrated the extent of the phenomenon. His delegation strongly condemned mercenarism and would continue to work for its prohibition. It strongly rejected the accusation that Angolan citizens were involved as mercenaries in the conflict in the Republic of the Congo. Cooperation between Angola and the Congo was based on bilateral agreements signed by the two Governments and, of course, included military cooperation. His delegation supported the continuation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on mercenaries, to whom it pledged its full cooperation.

62. **Mr. Hunte** (Saint Lucia) said that respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, as set forth in Articles 1 and 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, had always held a special significance for the small island developing States of the Caribbean and had served as a guiding principle in the region's ongoing process of self-determination. According to one of the founding fathers of self-determination, the late President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, that principle meant the ability of a people to determine their own future and to govern themselves without interference. The late Kwame Nkrumah, former President of Ghana, had also said that it was far better to govern oneself than to be governed by anyone else. Self-determination was the unfinished business of the United Nations in the current millennium and the international community must redouble its efforts to complete the process in the new millennium. That task remained incomplete in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, where the majority of the remaining Non-Self-Governing-Territories were located and whose peoples had yet to exercise their right of self-determination.

63. His delegation strongly reaffirmed that the principle of absolute and complete political equality must continue to be the standard that applied to the self-determination process of those small island territories. The international community could not accept anything less than the goal of self-determination and subsequent political equality simply because many of the territories in question were small in size, and his delegation reaffirmed the longstanding principle of the General Assembly that size should not be used as an impediment to the exercise of the right of self-determination.

64. **Mr. Yuasise** (Papua New Guinea) said that for more than half the current decade, his delegation had chaired the Special Committee on decolonization. Although some progress was being made in that area, it hoped that before the end of the year 2000 agreement would be reached on specific programmes of action for each Territory, to help the Special Committee complete its mandate, and that the United Nations, with the support and cooperation of the Member States, especially the administering Powers, would settle the issue of the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation noted with appreciation the cooperation and understanding shown by some administering Powers and Member States, especially New Zealand in the case of Tokelau, France in the case of New Caledonia, Indonesia and Portugal in the case of East Timor, and the parties involved in the proposed referendum for Western Sahara.

65. His delegation noted the detailed information contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as the measures taken and the progress made by the United Nations in combating those phenomena. The various legislative and institutional mechanisms introduced by some Member States for the betterment of humankind and civil society should be encouraged, and he called on other States which had not yet done so to take similar action.

66. There was also discrimination in the area of employment. Not only was there gender inequality, but in some developing countries transnational and multinational corporations were very influential both politically and economically and often preferred to employ foreign rather than local workers. That was done in the name of efficiency and profit maximization, with little or no regard for the human resource and technology transfer needs of the host country. The United Nations needed to address those issues in either the Third Committee or other relevant committees.

67. Another new danger was the use of information technology and the Internet to promote racist ideas and information which could incite new racial hatred. That would very quickly undermine the successes achieved and the good work done in that field. The international community must take the lead in solving that problem. His delegation hoped that the World Conference to be held in South Africa in 2001 would set new targets for solving the current problems in that field.

68. **Mr. Malenovsky** (Czech Republic), referring to the statement delivered in the Third Committee on behalf of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, said that his delegation appreciated the Special Rapporteur's work but felt that, by focusing mainly on the problem of the Roma population in the Czech Republic and two other European countries while referring only sporadically and in an isolated manner to current manifestations of racism, discrimination or xenophobia in other parts of the world, that statement had not been adequately balanced.

69. His country was fully aware that the situation of the Roma community in its territory was unsatisfactory. Accordingly, being a democratic country, it paid attention to the recommendations and suggestions of other countries and international institutions. Although it was a party to the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and its domestic legislation protected the Roma community, it had not always been feasible to free interpersonal relations from the elements of intolerance so typical for many countries which were still coping with the heritage of their totalitarian past.

70. In the past few months, his country had been criticized in connection with the construction of a two-metre-high wall in the town of Ústí nad Labem, which had also been mentioned — in a regrettably uninformed manner — in the Special Rapporteur's statement. The construction of the wall had seriously damaged the country's image. Although the intention of the builders had been to solve a dispute between groups of citizens, the wall had gradually become a symbol of racial intolerance. Even if it did not agree with that perception, his Government was committed to finding a balanced solution to the problem. Accordingly, on 18 October 1999 a special representative of the Government had been appointed to reopen the dialogue between the parties to the dispute.

71. His Government was aware of its responsibility for the overall improvement of the status of the Roma community in its territory. In the past few years, many fundamental, positive steps had been taken in that regard on which information had been provided to the international community. It would be naive, however, to think that a genuine improvement in the status of the world's Roma community could be accomplished in a few years.

72. The problem of the Roma undoubtedly had international and European dimensions and as such must be targeted by States acting together in close cooperation. His Government had been calling for such cooperation. In 1998, as a result of its initiative and financial contribution, the structure of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Warsaw had been reinforced and the post of coordinator for the Roma had been created. In cooperation with the Council of Europe, a strategic plan for the solution of inter-ethnic problems between the majority population and the Roma community had been developed in Brno, the second largest city in the

Czech Republic, and the Council of Europe intended to introduce it as a blueprint elsewhere in Europe.

73. His Government was strongly committed to pursuing its international efforts with regard to the status of the Roma community. It believed that, through cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, it would gain the necessary support of other States for its call to approach the problem from a Europe-wide perspective, in order to achieve a general, lasting improvement in the status of the Roma in Europe and throughout the world.

74. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) said that, ever since achieving statehood, Haiti had had a tradition of non-discrimination which had been affirmed in its very first Constitution. Throughout its existence, it had been in the vanguard of anti-racist movements. In 1972, it had acceded to and ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and in 1981, the Government had promulgated a decree bringing the provisions of the Convention into force, especially those on the punishment of the crime of racial discrimination. In August 1999, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order had submitted a second report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Committee had expressed satisfaction at the fact that international human rights instruments became an integral part of Haiti's domestic legislation. However, since the Committee had also expressed concern at the Government's repeated assertion that there was no racial discrimination in Haiti, she wished to make a number of observations.

75. First of all, there was no racial discrimination in Haiti because the country had always been very racially diverse. The recent boom in technology and growth of infrastructure had contributed to the racial mix, with the result that racial distinctions were becoming increasingly blurred and ethnic types increasingly complex. Such diversity meant that while there might be colour prejudice there was no racial discrimination, since Haiti remained a black country racially speaking. Secondly, Haiti's domestic legislation contained provisions against racial discrimination, as had its successive Constitutions. As a result, there was no racial discrimination as such in Haiti. Haiti's population, having suffered racism at first hand, had always been in the forefront of the struggle against that crime. Although some Haitians might be colour-prejudiced in private, that was far from being Haiti's main social problem. In a country whose population was black and mulatto, the main issue was inequality between the rich, of whatever colour, who exploited the labour of the poor, who could also be of any race.

76. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he wished to clarify some of the issues raised by the Eritrean delegation with regard to the political, economic and social situation in Ethiopia. Although it might appear from that delegation's statement that the situation in Eritrea was better, the fact was that Eritrea had no constitution, no political parties and no free press. In any case, he believed that the issue of good governance and economic and social policies came within the purview of each State and that the Committee was not the place to discuss it, while it was the place to discuss issues such as unprovoked aggression against a neighbouring State.

77. Eritrea's irresponsible behaviour was manifested by the allegations which its representative had made in the Committee in an attempt to tarnish Ethiopia's image vis-à-vis its neighbours. That representative had named three countries in particular, but Ethiopia maintained good relations with those countries, as it had with Eritrea until May 1998 when the Eritrean regime had committed its aggression. That was the issue which the Committee should discuss.

78. Although racism no longer formed part of the official doctrine of any country, it still existed in practice in cruel forms which called for the adoption of effective countermeasures by the international community. His delegation was extremely concerned about the unabated racist measures adopted by the Eritrean regime against Ethiopians living both in Eritrea and in the occupied Ethiopian territory, for whom denial of human rights, lack of legal remedies and outright discrimination had become the order of the day. The Eritrean Government had given orders, although not publicly, for the summary dismissal of Ethiopian nationals from their jobs and the eviction of Ethiopian tenants from their homes. In addition, the police and organized hit squads subjected them to beatings, arrest, rape, torture and killings. Those atrocities were being committed away from the eyes of the international community, because the Eritrean regime had refused to allow non-governmental organizations and some United Nations agencies to operate in the country. The Eritrean authorities had also confiscated money and property from Ethiopians, and

employers were refusing to pay them their salaries and the compensation due to them for termination without notice. Ethiopian nationals were being denied medical treatment and routinely discharged from hospitals, they had to endure racist slurs, they were being urged to leave the country and they were often arbitrarily arrested. If they decided to leave, they were required to pay exorbitant emigration fees and were held in detention centres where some had even died.

79. For the past year and a half, the Eritrean regime had been trying desperately to exploit the issue of Ethiopia's treatment of some Eritrean nationals. That was because its own clandestine terrorist structure in Ethiopia had been smashed. It had also used the issue to divert attention from its aggression against Ethiopia and its indiscriminate bombing of civilians, including schoolchildren. His delegation once again called upon the international community to condemn the Eritrean regime for its aggression, deplore its racist propaganda and attacks and hold it accountable for its war crimes.

80. **Mr. Priedkalns** (Latvia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he wished to refute the allegations made by the Russian delegation both at the current meeting and in August 1999 in Geneva during the fifty-fifth session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. For all the Russian Federation's claims that Latvia's legislation breached international norms on the rights of national minorities, both the Council of Europe and the OSCE Committee on National Minorities had found Latvia to be in compliance with those norms.

81. Latvia's progress on human rights was all the more significant when set against the historical backdrop of the twentieth century, in which two totalitarian regimes had occupied it, violating the human rights and forcibly altering the ethnic make-up of its population. That had made it especially aware that governments had an obligation to defend human rights, strengthen democratic institutions and ensure the social well-being of all citizens. Fulfilment of that obligation, which was incumbent on all States Members of the United Nations, was also an ongoing process.

82. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was one thing to make allegations but another to substantiate them, which the Ethiopian representative had failed to do. Eritrea's allegations, on the other hand, had been corroborated even by Ethiopians. Professor Tilahun Yilma of the University of California had described Ethiopia as a "tribal homeland", while Professor Minase Haile, former Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and currently a professor at Yeshiva University, had said that Ethiopia's Constitution institutionalized tribalism. On the purpose of Ethiopian politics, Professor Messay Kebede, professor of philosophy at the University of Dayton, had said that the power of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was totally dependent on the pursuit of Tigrean hegemony, at the cost of national unity. *The Ethiopian Review* had written that the policy of Prime Minister Meles and TPLF was one of "Tigray über Alles" and sought to couple Tigray's military power with economic power, and that "never in the history of Ethiopia have so few confiscated so much wealth from so many in such a short period of time". Professor Worku Aberra, senior lecturer in economics at Dawson College, Montreal, had written that despite the disproportionate economic and human costs to non-Tigreans, the regime was still pursuing its discriminatory economic policy against them.

83. According to *The Ethiopian Register*, the strategy of Prime Minister Meles was to ensure Tigrean domination from Massawa, in Eritrea, to Mogadishu, in Somalia. The regime had adopted the "Afrikaner" method of imposing minority rule through minority control of the armed and security forces. *The Ethiopian Register* also accused the regime of fanning historical grievances among Ethiopia's other ethnic groups, as part of a policy of divide and rule, and of promoting ethnic discrimination and ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia. Furthermore, Ethiopians who spoke up for human rights, democracy and a non-ethnic political system were being imprisoned on false charges.

84. He doubted whether Ethiopia could be considered a democratic State when it had over 10,000 political prisoners, four fifths of the country's journalists were in prison and extrajudicial executions and torture were being carried out. Contrasting Ethiopia with a country where there was good governance and the Government did not fear its people might show which country had the better Government.

85. **Mr. Rogov** (Russian Federation), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he was surprised at the comments made by the representative of Latvia. His delegation had always believed that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination must be respected and heeded, and it reserved the right to raise

the issue of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia during the consideration of other items, both in the Third Committee and in other Committees.

86. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the rule of law prevailed in his country. It was possible to criticize the Government, and there were also intellectuals, including some who held dissident views, who wrote about economic and social issues. With regard to the sources cited by the Eritrean representative in support of his allegations, other academics had written in glowing terms about Ethiopia's democratic process.

87. Ethiopia had been the object of aggression by a neighbouring country and all Ethiopians were united in resisting it, as they had been on an earlier occasion. He wished to remind the Eritrean delegation that it should not misinterpret the political debate taking place in his country, which was trying to establish democracy after a long civil war. In May 1998, Eritrea had launched an unprovoked attack on Ethiopia and, despite the international community's intervention, continued to commit atrocities against Ethiopian nationals living in its territory. It was inappropriate, therefore, to refer to the system of government in the two countries or to try, as Eritrea was doing, to divert attention from the main issue, which was Eritrea's aggression. Ethiopia had always been committed to resolving the dispute with Eritrea peacefully. It had not committed any aggression against a neighbouring country and it had systemically accepted the proposals put forward by the United States, Rwanda and OAU.

88. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his country's position on the issue of aggression had been made amply clear on several occasions, including during the general debate in the plenary at the current session. From the beginning of the conflict, it had called — and it continued to call — for a peaceful and legal settlement. It had signed all three OAU documents, but Ethiopia had yet to sign the third document which would enable OAU and the United Nations to initiate the implementation of the peace package. In fact, it had kept up its ultimatum that unless Eritrea withdrew unilaterally and unconditionally from its own territories, Ethiopia would make it do so by force. At that very moment, Ethiopia's leaders were declaring the completion of their preparations for an all-out war. Lastly, it was farcical that Ethiopia should accuse Eritrea of being the major source of regional destabilization, when on 20 October 1999 it had supplied several planeloads of armaments to Somali factions.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.